



## 5 Things you can do to reduce lawn care pollution

1. Select slow release or insoluble fertilizers.
2. Read and follow the instructions on the fertilizer bags.
3. Test your soil.
4. Ask your lawn care company to fertilize with care.
5. Avoid spreading fertilizer on paved areas.

**Fertilize in the Fall to watch your plants grow Tall**



### How do you test your soil?

Soil testing kits can be picked up at your local Alexandria library or at Virginia Tech's Local Cooperative Extension office in Alexandria. Instructions on how to properly test your soil will be included with the kit. Simply mail your soil sample to the following address:

### Contact Information

Alexandria's Virginia Tech. Local Cooperative Extension office:

Lee Center

1108 Jefferson Street

Alexandria, VA 22314

Main Office Phone: 703-519-3325

<http://offices.ext.vt.edu/view.cfm?webname=alexandria>



City of Alexandria Transportation & Environmental Services

Division of Environmental Quality

301 King Street

City Hall, room 3900

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: 703-838-4334

Fax: 703-519-5941

<http://alexandriava.gov/tes/eq/overview.html>



Excessive Nutrients can create harmful algal blooms that choke out aquatic life

# Environmentally Friendly Lawn Care

## How Does Lawn Care Affect Water Quality?

Proper lawn care is an essential part of protecting our local water quality and the health of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. Fertilizers contain nutrients that, when over-applied, have contributed to algae blooms and fish kills in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Plants can only utilize a certain percentage of applied fertilizer, and the excess fertilizer washes away with the rain into neighborhood streams. Fertilizers contain nitrogen and phosphorus that end up feeding our streams in addition to our lawns and gardens. When streams have increased nutrient loadings, plants and algae grow above normal population levels, absorbing greater amounts of oxygen, and thus decreasing available oxygen for fish and other marine life. To avoid the monetary and environmental costs associated with water pollution related to over fertilization, there are several steps that Alexandria property owners can undertake.

## What can you do to help?

The best way to prevent pollution is through education of fertilizer users. Here are some helpful ways to properly maintain your lawn in an environmentally friendly way.

- Don't fertilize if it isn't necessary
- Select a fertilizer that has little or no phosphorous and approximately 60% of nitrogen in slow-release, water insoluble form
- Fertilize during the dry season
- Test your soil
- Avoid spreading fertilizer onto paved areas
- Read instructions on how to properly apply fertilizer; avoid over concentrations
- Light watering of fertilizer will facilitate plant root absorption
- Ask your lawn care company to fertilize with care

## Why should you test your soil?

Soil testing is great way you can help clean up our neighborhood streams and have a great lawn.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute has a soil-testing laboratory that performs tests for the public and researchers. Data developed from these tests provides information on what and how much nutrient you should apply to your lawn. Tests are performed to evaluate the soil's nutrient potential and determine the most beneficial application rates of fertilizer and lime for optimum plant growth.

Accurate soil analysis with subsequent recommendations provides a tool for making economical and ecological land use decisions. Maximum economic yields are realized through careful management of nutrient availability. Over-fertilization is costly and may be damaging to the environment.